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EMBEDDED CREATIVITY: STRUCTURAL INTERCONNECTIONS BETWEEN MATERIALITY, VISUALITY, AND AGENCY IN EVERYDAY PERCEPTUAL SETTINGS

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Abstract. The goal of the article is to examine how some material surfaces contribute to the social consequentiality of the everyday visual experience, generating, transmitting and disseminating non-verbal social meanings, making up bulk of contemporary world's communicative practices, even its very social fabric.
Unlike most of the current – otherwise enormously productive – theoretical initiatives making the social functions of material objects and surfaces the main focus of their social-theoretical inquiry, an approach proposed in this article lays emphasis on some formal structural correlations between the modes of materiality of visually perceived phenomena and the behavioural and emotional opportunities for perceiving subjects. I propose the notion of "generative surface" as the most semantically dense and socially consequential type of visual materiality – a sort of perceivable surfaces that, in contrast to mere physical ones, constitute meaningful material settings substantially influencing our creative capacities within everyday experiences.

Keywords: agency, creativity, materiality, meaning-making, mediality, performativity.

Introduction

The exponential multiplication of material forms characteristic of industrial revolutions of the late 19th–early 20th centuries and driven by industrial capitalism and emergent globalization processes began, in its current – post-industrial, or "informational" – stages, to split into two intertwined but asynchronous tendencies: quantitative extension and multidirectional proliferation of artificial material settings, on the one hand, and their qualitative differentiation and intensification, on the other (Lash, 2010). By the latter, I mean an increasing sensual density and configurational complexity of the current material environments, leading to substantial changes in our perceptual attitudes: while formerly most of objectual properties have been more or less successfully accommodated to human practical needs and – to some

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degree – even absorbed by them, today we are increasingly forced to follow affordances provided by objectual forms and environments that, in turn, have sprung from and remain integrated into the heterogeneous logics of "culturalization processes" (Reckwitz, 2016) as well as the pre- and non-linguistic communicative strategies. Completely new forms of practice emerge incessantly as the process of material complexification goes on, creating new sensual settings and, what is even more important, new configurations and forms of materiality itself.

All these processes beg the questions concerning the impact they have on human agential capacities and cultural creativity: how far does culturalization (aestheticization) of material settings affect our ability to feel, think, and act? What kinds of agency emerge from the proliferation and differentiation of material forms? What opportunities do they offer for social and individual well-being?

To answer these questions, I propose the notion of structural correlation between the modes of materiality of visually perceived phenomena and the behavioural and emotional opportunities for perceiving subjects.

The main thesis of the article is that among all types of perceptual materiality, the "generative surface" stands out as the most semantically dense and socially consequential type of visual materiality – a sort of perceivable surfaces that, in contrast to mere physical ones, constitute meaningful material settings substantially influencing our creative capacities within everyday experiences.

In what follows, I begin with a brief critical survey of some current theoretical strategies aimed at the revision of the traditional – dualistic – understanding of the relation between materiality and agency. Then I turn to discussing the main structural forms of materiality considered as both source and support of contemporary cultural practices. In the final section of the paper, I sketch my own view on the agential as well as meaning-making potential of what I term "generative materiality".

1. Rethinking interrelationship between materiality and agency

Admittedly, the most consequential result of philosophical revolutions of 19th–20th centuries consists in blurring the long-standing boundaries between established categorical regions, such as "human" and "natural", "subject" and "object", "passivity" and "activity". Kantian and post-Kantian philosophical tradition, Marxism, philosophy of life and, last but not least, psychoanalysis have brought these previously isolated ontological regions into incessant movement. Various attempts to think this movement more positively led ultimately to elaboration and acceptance of the agential potentialities of material settings, what, in turn, as we will show bellow, requires more differentiated, tensile, and more liberal notion of materiality.

Previous stages of this process might be considered as the theoretical endeavours aimed at conceptually stretching, squeezing, augmenting and, in the long run, dispersing the notion of subjectivity. Examples of this strategy we find in psychoanalysis, Marxism and phenomenology, where subjectivity was being decentred on different theoretical foundations and with different conceptual as well as practical consequences. While enormously productive, such a predominantly destructive strategy had, however, some weaknesses. The most obvious of them was residual subjectivism that can be identified in many of the 20th century

philosophical doctrines. For example, Martin Heidegger's "being-in-the-world" still has subjectivist implications, most clear in his notion of understanding as the primary mode of being. Admittedly, precisely for that reason he has undertaken his famous "turn" of 1930s, favouring the historical and event-dimension of being and experience over the structural (i.e. non-historical) determinants of human being, elaborated in depth in his earlier period, especially in *Being and Time* (German: *Sein und Zeit*, first edition in 1927) (Heidegger, 1962). This emphasis on experience and perception, accompanied by some underestimation of the materiality issue, of course, is not unique to Heidegger but is one of the core traits of phenomenological tradition as a whole.

What distinguishes the current stage of de-subjectification processes is the increasing interest in agential potentials of the material world and their consequences for intellectual and political life in contemporary – highly differentiated – societies. Indeed, it is only due to extended notion of agency that the materiality gets involved in systematic reflections on factors of socially consequential activity. Reinterpreting the agency as a kind of distributed potency to bring about different changes and movements in all kinds of worlds ranging from physical reality to imaginative worlds to virtual reality, scholars of the last generations have given to the old discussion a new and very important impetus consisting in promoting the "horizontal" theoretical approaches.

By "horizontality" here, I mean in the first instance the overall cultural tendency to place different, even homogeneous elements on the same plane, combining them variously, whether theoretically or literally, either in conceptualization or in architectural practices – the tendency underlying most of contemporary cultural forms and activities and proliferating across the globe. Over the last decades, the vertical and therefore hierarchical conceptual axis of the subject/object relations, which almost completely dominated the modern philosophical thought, has gradually made way to the horizontal dimension of continuous experiential fields saturated with fluid and distributed agential forms (Latour, 2005).

This paradigmatic shift is now epitomized by various theoretical positions and research strategies elaborated in disciplines as different as philosophy, sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, social semiotics, actor-network theory, theories of image, philosophical aesthetics, and political sciences. Most of these approaches and theories fall into umbrella categories such as material culture studies, sensual culture studies, visual studies, nonhuman turn, iconic turn etc. that shed some light on the primary subject matter and the scope of this kind of research.

They also could be differentiated according to how they understand the interrelationship between the material and the agential.

One of the representatives of the aforementioned paradigmatic shift, so-called social semiotics, a theoretical program based initially on the insights of systemic-functional linguistics of Michael Halliday (1978), which considers language as an integral part of social practice and as practice in itself, brings to the fore the combinatory principle of contemporary communication that can no longer draw on the notion of separate "media" and of "always already" given and stable sign systems. Interpretation, communication as well as many other forms of meaning-making are not an "interior" intellectual activity but rather a kind of external social practice, extremely contextual, pragmatically motivated, and contingent

on the "affordances" of the actual material settings (Kress, 2010). According to this theory, today's communication involves, as its integral part and fundamental prerequisite, a kind of permanent material (micro-)practice, which is often not identified as such and the main task of which is to adjust the occasional material objects and settings to the requirements of the particular communicative situation. The scope of these adjustments ranges from the control of bodily posture to professional skills in the sphere of design. But what is most interesting here is the middle level of these activities – all forms of everyday manipulating and combining the various material components of different provenance, aimed at creatively producing the occasional, tentative, and temporary but, at the same time, communicatively efficacious material devices and settings.

Although social semiotics actively participated in the "horizontalization" of the current research perspective in social sciences and humanities, it nevertheless still remains not quite radical as regards the revision of the traditional view on the relationship between the material and the meaningful. Despite strong emphasis on the material factors of communication, including their unstoppable dynamics, the matter itself remains dependent on the previous articulating activity of a subject endowed with the ability to turn it into the complex meaningful surface (Iedema, 2003).

While classical semiotics was turned toward the past (the established semiotic systems), and social semiotics toward the present (practices of (re)semiotization), some alternative versions of semiotics are future-oriented. For example, American anthropologist Webb Keane offered a concept of "bundling", which means that each meaningful quality, e.g. "redness", is always co-present with other qualities "which can become contingent but real factors in its social life" (2005, p. 188). In other words, material constitution of a thing is not irrelevant to its meaning-making potential that can be activated in the future, and that, in a sense, is already co-present in this thing which proves thus to be temporally distributed, encompassing the present and the future in very fact of its presence.

Yet this theoretical model, like those already discussed, leaves unchanged one important moment: there are always some minimal components of the material sphere that are insusceptible to agential activation, waiting for being given a meaning from outside – from semiotically activated causal dispositions. Thus, many of new theoretical approaches to the old problem of agency do not cross this threshold, that is to say, they do not go so far as to offer an alternative concept of materiality itself.

This remains true also for otherwise very fruitful theoretical strategies recently elaborated in the social anthropology and other human sciences. For example, the very influential writings by Alfred Gell (2013), Daniel Miller (2009), and Ian Hodder (2012) are focused on the multiple ways human agency – and therefore our self-consciousness – articulates itself, while getting involved, or, as Hodder puts it, entangled in various relations and dispositions of the surrounding material world. According to this logic, the inevitable immersion of human being in the material world does not necessarily alienate it from its "proper self" and therefore impoverishes it. On the contrary, this kind of immersion rather articulates it and thereby enriches.

Contemporary cultural sociology takes us several steps further along the path to the more differentiated notion of materiality. Jeffrey C. Alexander, Dominik Bartmanski and Bernhard

Giesen have recently announced the "iconic turn" in sociological research, deemed to override the "classical" distinction between the material and the meaningful, between object and agency (2012). The "icon" in this context plays the role of the overarching term that brings to the fore an indissoluble interconnection between material objects and cultural meanings. As Alexander himself puts it, "icons are symbolic condensations. They root generic, social meanings in a specific and 'material' form" (2010, p. 11). The interconnection between "social meaning" and "material form" is mediated by "aesthetically shaped materiality", a sensual contact with which gives rise to transmitting the meanings, not all of which can be transmitted verbally.

Despite the ambiguity of Alexander's notion of materiality and his adherence to semiotic dualism of signifier and signified, what is important and fruitful in his theoretical program of "iconic turn" in cultural sociology is the pronounced shift from focusing on material objects to considering the sensually perceptible and aesthetically articulated surfaces. Surface is considered as a minimal unit of the matter "invested with social meaning" (Alexander, 2010, p. 11). For Alexander, the surface is not just an arbitrary carrier of a meaning imposed on it from outside. The meaning is rather an immediate outcome of the surface experience, that is to say, it is an integral part of the "feeling consciousness" geared to "a cultural materiality" (Alexander, 2010, p. 13). Unlike singular objects, which almost completely can be accommodated by respective concept, or category, and which indeed can easily and frictionless be integrated in any network of institutionalized or informal practices (from everyday pragmatics to sophisticated research), aesthetically articulated, textured surfaces exceed any attempt at identifying them, pinning them down, both visually and conceptually. Moreover, experiencing the textured surfaces draws more heavily on the tactile, or haptic types of perception than on the optic ones (Marks, 2002, pp. 2–4), which works as a factor preventing the prevalence of identifying (that is to say, excessively activist) attitude in experience.

It is worth nevertheless noting that Alexander does not go so far as to overcome the dualism of sensible surface and meaningful depth (2008, p. 6), underlying – and thereby subverting – his otherwise very promising project of the iconic, or feeling consciousness.

Some interesting efforts to avoid dualistic pitfalls have been recently undertaken by a number of scholars drawing heavily on Deleuzean line in contemporary philosophy. For example, Jane Bennett has offered a thought-provoking project of "vital materialism" aiming at recognition of some power, or "vitality intrinsic to materiality" (2010, p. 3). According to her, the objects assembled into an accidental configuration experienced by someone who assumes non-theoretical attitude within manifold everyday encounters possess some autonomy, an experienced vitality, and even agency. She terms this vernacular experiential transformation of the perceived world "thing-power", which manifests itself as a turn of "objects" into "things" that are "vivid entities not entirely reducible to the contexts in which (human) subjects set them, never entirely exhausted by their semiotics" (Bennett, 2010, p. 5). This experiential turn draws on "methodological *naiveté*" which is a kind of phenomenological *epoché* providing access to full range of our experiential feelings, including that which do not comply with the currently dominant scientific view on the material world. We have just to postpone our "genealogical critics of objects" in order to "render manifest a subsistent world of nonhuman vitality" (Bennett, 2010, p. 17). This world, which is always present but, to be manifest and thus efficacious, requires some shift in our experiential attitude, comprises a utopian potential

consisting in promoting behavioural patterns, much more balanced in political and ecological respect than it is the case nowadays.

Despite all its attractiveness, this theory, too, lacks an elaborated conception of (culturalized) materiality that would account for objectual agency beyond metaphysical assumptions about vital forces inherent not only to physiological bodies but also to physical ones.

Before I proceed to my own proposal for a notion of material agency, I would like just to mention two further examples of interesting attempts to revise the traditional view of the relationships between human and nonhuman agency, between meaning and materiality. The first of them is presented in Giuliana Bruno's recent book (2014) on the surface as the main interface of the current cultural experience, as a kind of "textural materiality" and "surface tension" that comprises in itself all the relevant possibilities for production and circulation of images in the "digital age". The second, concisely couched in the compact book by Emanuele Coccia (2016), is geared towards emanative conception of image understood as a holistic space of the primary presence of the world within human experience.

Deeply appreciating their promising overthrow of the traditional, subject-matter-oriented approach to the images, embodied in an innovative stress on the emanative (Coccia, 2016) and "sartorial" (Bruno, 2014) aspects of image experience, I should nevertheless point out the still missing explanation for the sources of these aspects and potentials of visually perceived materials – an explanation that would be grounded in the materiality itself. To indicate such sources is in so far important as this – and only this – gives rise to the more balanced view on the meaning-making potential of material settings that would be socially and culturally consequential and, at the same time, not psychologized.

In what follows, I propose the notion of performative materiality considered as a primary cultural form, or, better, a primary experiential cluster consisting of such interrelated components as a definite type of agency, correlative perceptual attitude, corresponding emotional reaction, and a respective type of meaning-making. Such an experiential cluster has some dynamics inherent to it, which accounts for some variety of its possible forms that, despite qualitative difference among them, are structurally interconnected.

2. Materiality and performativity

Thus, readily recognizing the great variety of material factors influencing our social life, now I focus on some elementary, in a sense pre-social forms of sensual experience and correlative forms of perceptible materiality; on how they are performed and deployed in multilayered and densely structured space of (mainly) visual perception, and what impact these pre-social experiences have on political life and social creativity.

I begin with examining the structural and, to some degree, universal traits of materiality/performativity-correlations, each of which has a respective meaning-making potential. Universality of these traits means, in the first place, their omnipresence as a factor structuring (and, therefore, enabling) main types of experiential approach to the surrounding world.

For the sake of clarity, I visually (in the form of a table) represent the interrelationship between the elements of "experiential cluster" mentioned above, as well as between "clusters" themselves.

The upper row of the table (Table 1) consists of the column titles that signify the main elements of each experiential cluster, or – to borrow a term from Keane – "bundle" (2005). Three lower rows show what form each of these elements takes on within three main forms of clusters, whereas their arrangement from top to bottom exposes a tendency to the more intensive, dense, and, as a consequence, more meaningful elementary sensuous events. Tensility of matter (not materials) is always counterbalanced by that of human sensitivity (and by a type of understanding, action, and meaning-making inherent to it). The matter, as it is understood bellow, is not just given or mere existent but sensuously as well as cognitively enacted and thereby performed.

I believe we have reasons to discriminate between three (ideal) types of the visually perceived. First of them, the "object", draws on the type of materiality that can be called "substrate". This type implies the mode of perceptivity that is mostly associated with, and dependent on, the human ability of identification, however motivated in whatever context (pragmatic, epistemological or aesthetic). Materiality here has the status of non-perceivable vehicle of properties that are, in turn, perceived mostly by means of a given category within which they are accommodated. In terms of its function within everyday perceptual settings, it plays mainly negative, or at most neutral role, passively facilitating the categorically guided operations of distinction and demarcation. The agency inherent to this kind of materiality is minimal and to some degree negative. For the most part, it passively supports human actions because of

Table 1. Structural interconnections between types of materiality and forms of experience (source: created by author)

The visually perceived	Type of materiality	Status of materiality	Function of materiality	Type of "material" agency	Type of subject's attitude	Subject's mode of activity	Semantic role
Object	Substrate	Foundation [**vehicle**]	Demarcation (restrictive)	(Opaque) Limiting	Dispersion (following pre-given rules and intentions)	Identifying	Pre-semantic (embedded in outer – pragmatic – contexts)
Sign (thing)	Material	Intermediary [**channel**]	Articulation (supportive)	(Transparent) Inviting	Attention (seeing-through)	Reading	Sub-semantic (embodied in pre-given semiotic structures)
Texture	Surface	Repository [**place**]	Absorption (cumulative)	(Reflective) Directing	Sensation (Being-at)	Dwelling	Infra-semantic (slowing down standard trajectories of understanding)
Screen	Pellicle	Mediator [**medium**]	Enactment (transformative)	(Luminous) Opening	Affection (being-in)	Immersion	Supra-semantic (resolved into a meaning-making event)

its being almost completely assimilated by respective categories working as a mark for either cognitive or practical mobilisation. These elements representing the "object's" party invoke correlative responses on the "subject's" side, producing a respective attitude and a dominating mode of activity (following the pre-given rules and manipulative identification, respectively).

The second kind of the perceived – thing, or sign – draws on the materiality's condition as a material that have a status of an arbitrary intermediary connecting and channelling a practically motivated subject's call to the world and the world's unconditioned response. This type of materiality fulfils supportive function, directing and triggering heterogeneous processes of theoretically as well as practically interpreting the material settings mostly consisting of separable objects extremely vulnerable to the vicissitudes of external contexts and target-settings. The agency that can be performed by a material is confined to the triggering and inviting of special kinds of subject's activity consisting in the scanning, reading and (both theoretically and pragmatically) interpreting things, signs, and artefacts. A kind of bodily-emotional attitude correlative to this form of activity is the concentration on a supposed meaning – a sort of semi-seeing-through the material that is "always already" somehow articulated. As a consequence, the role played by a material within the meaning-making processes is sub-semantic, i.e. it is not semantically irrelevant, but this relevance remains subsidiary.

The third type of the perceived – the texture – and its material base – the surface – has much greater cultural relevance and, respectively, much greater meaning-making potential than two types discussed previously. The cultural function of this kind of the visually perceived, which is not imposed on it from outside but rather inherent in it, is to be a repository, or place for an intensive bodily-emotional presence promoted and activated within respective experiences that can be termed the various forms of a sensuous dwelling under the guidance of the absorptive textures of surfaces perceived tactilely, or environmentally rather than optically (Gibson, 1986). This sort of perception is, on the one hand, highly widespread in everyday life, embracing many a simplest perceptual action performed within vernacular material environments (spatial aspect) and ordinary pragmatic contexts (temporal aspect). On the other hand, these perceptual actions require a kind of activation: the minute, often barely noticed shifts in the behavioural regimes, leading nevertheless to socially and existentially important consequences, most significant among which is spontaneous intensification of our relations with the surrounding material setting and, by implication, with ourselves. This is the first among types of materiality discussed in this section which is not just subject to conceptual identification but "strikes back", inflecting, slowing down and overriding the subject's initial intentions.

The constellation of elements of performative, or experiential bundle changes once again and even more radically when we proceed to the last element of our classification – the "screen" as another kind of the visually perceived. The part the materiality ("pellicle") plays here is quite outstanding. It is a screen that not only occupies a space but makes it, enacting and enhancing the potentials for sensuous appearance. In this sense, the pellicle is not completely dependent on its "bearer" – any kind of physical surface – but extends its presence and its effectiveness beyond particularity of objects on which it is perceived. Materiality here unfolds its agency as an event of a luminous opening that gives an opportunity for a creative intensifying of perceptual experience. The subject's attitude (affection) as well as its dominant mode of activity (experiential immersion) are accompanied by the radical suppression of

intentional agency intrinsic to self-conscious subject. The meaning-making potential here is eminently semantic (and in this sense, supra-semantic), which means that the meaning is an internal *effect* of the whole event of perception (and not restricted to an intentional operation of "giving meaning").

Let us dwell briefly on this last type of the experiential, or performative matter distinguished by its explicitly medial status.

3. Materiality and mediality

So, the main distinctive feature of this kind of matter is its intrinsic mediality that must be strongly distinguished from mere medial function that could pertain to some object, device, or surface.

To make this feature clearer, let us juxtapose two notions of surface that, despite their being ontologically different from each other, both fall under the same category of the "experientially given": physical surface, on the one hand, and evocative, or generative one, on the other. This latter exemplifies and concretizes the notion of the screen-like pellicle as we understand it in our context[1].

The juxtaposition (Table 2) as I hope highlights the following key features of the screen considered as a special kind of materiality:

1. Mediality in this case is not just a facultative characteristic but a trait inherent in the very existence of this kind of the visually perceived. What we perceive, for example, on a canvas or photograph – if we conceive it in its full presence, not reduced to being a mere symbolic device or a "content", but considered as a specific kind of experientially given surface – belongs to its own space and at the same time makes up this space, hovering, in a sense, over what can be identified as its vehicle, sliding from one medial space to another: from painting to photography, video and further to landscape, imaginative spaces, and architecture;
2. This trait entails specific, seamless contiguity of all kinds of generative surfaces – which contiguity could be termed "surface tension of media", following the usage proposed by Bruno (2014, p. 3). This, in turn, allows to approach culture, or, rather, one of its current forms in terms of the sensible fabric, envelope, covering – all that which can be discovered not through an intellectual effort alone, but through the ability to focus on tactile and emotional aspects, experientially (performatively) stitching the "pieces" of screen-like pellicle into a continuum in which many forms of cultural life can be established and then developed;
3. Generative surface is much more demanding of perceptual events than the physical one for which it can be sufficient to be just thought (grasped, identified), not necessarily perceived. In a sense, in the case of generative surface, perception acquires traits of richly ramified practices freighted with far-reaching psychosocial consequences and unintended possibilities for developing new forms of feeling and movement beyond any form of institutional control. It is precisely these traits that accounts for our use of the formula "embedded creativity" in the title of this article.

[1] I borrow this term from Bruno (2014) who, in her turn, draws on the Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's work (1987).

Table 2. Comparison between physical surface and generative pellicle (source: created by author)

Physical surface…	Generative surface (pellicle)…
…consists of multiple planes.	…consists of a single plane.
…is plural, surrounded by adjacent surfaces.	…is singular, insular.
…is discrete and outward-looking; its elements are – at least potentially – separable and build up metric interrelations.	…is integral and "implosive", or inward-looking; is not separable into individual elements but rather building up a unique medium of appearing.
…has a physical depth, access to which implies an unavoidable penetration (a transcending) of the surface itself.	…has no physical depth but sensible texture related in each of its sensuously discernible "points" to the whole surface perceived in the mode of tactile immersion rather than of optical apprehension.
…is permanently in need of verbal articulation (meaning should be imposed on it).	…exceeds any verbal articulation; is already (pre-verbally) articulated, meaningful.
…is given, included in temporal sequences of perception external to it.	…occurs, involving perception sequences in its own temporality.

In the last section of the article, I will elaborate briefly on agential implications of this kind of visually perceived and the pellicular materiality exemplified by it.

4. Mediality and agency

By contrast with three other ideal-typical forms of materiality sketched in the earlier sections of the article, generative surface, or a "pellicle" has an exceptional relation to an agency peculiarity of which is splitting along the lines of space, time, reflexivity as well as personal and social consequentiality.

In terms of space, activity engendered by the pellicle-like (screen-like, or medial) materiality showcases lack of unidirectionality and even directionality at all. In a sense, it spatializes itself, not so much acting towards a definite purpose as "emitting", "irradiating" its effects into non-structured social space, however indefinite these effects may seem at the first sight. Actually, this indefiniteness results from the essentially diffuse and distributed nature of this kind of agency, which, as it seems, should be assessed positively.

Perhaps contemporary photographic practices provide the best example of such effectiveness (though, of course, this is equally relevant to more traditional, "analogue" photography). Often sporadically taken and immediately uploaded on a social network, a digital photograph or, rather, a digital picture enters into multidirectional relations embracing the photographed scene (or subject), the connection (not always conscious) to the continuum of the photographic as well as a bodily-emotional disposition of perceiving subject – all this fusing into material tissue that not just unites but rather redefines (and thus, at least in this sense, generates) all its aforementioned components in accordance with its own logic. In a sense, this material tissue wrests the initiative from a human being, substantially enhancing the scope and scale of an action.

In addition, the specificity of such opportunities can be discussed in terms of time, which is a necessary complement to their spatial dimension. The radically performative and medial screen-, or pellicle-like surface is perception-dependent and therefore cannot be considered as a circumscribable static region observable from a position outside or above it. Perceiving means here, as was already mentioned, a kind of multisensorial immersion in the surface that even being activated and performatively disclosed by the particular perception nevertheless retains its autonomy. This autonomy manifests itself in generativity of the screen-like surface, which, in turn, is partly fleshed out in its capability to suspend the temporal sequences of both the "outer" and "imaginative" world, merging them into a unique (unregulated, dense) co-presence of agential potentialities afforded by this kind of matter. Because of their being not sequential, that is to say, equally distributed along monotonous time line, these potentialities may be extremely consequential, entering into a free play with each other and thus enabling a perceiving subject to be simultaneously both highly focused and multidirectionally dispersed beyond any visible boundaries.[2] All this is framed by particular temporal regime characterized first of all by intransitivity and simultaneity that are not just theoretically (from outside) identifiable factors but tasks to be performed. Intransitivity means self-containment, inward-orientedness of perception, it is not being embedded in an indefinitely long chain of experiences organized in accordance with some external logic, whereas simultaneity highlights instantaneous co-presence of all elements of perceived object within screen- or pellicle-like multisensorial material space, just like performative simultaneous co-presence of all pictorial elements of a painting turns it into the peculiar experiential space, which can be conceptually grasped as a special kind of appearing, namely the aesthetic one (Seel, 2005). Precisely this interlacement of materiality, mediality and performativity imparts unique characteristics to the temporal aspect of the forms of experience discussed above. The time here is not only lived but, moreover, felt.

One of the most important consequences of these considerations is a notion of the peculiar, embedded, or radical reflexivity, whose specificity consists in mutual reverberation of the perceived material texture and the imaginative space of the perceiving subject. Both of them, being involved into the visual performance, reflect in each other, thus enhancing their density, amplitude, and consistency. In a sense, we deal here with a zero-point-reflexivity which is placed beyond any distinction of activity and passivity and therefore cannot be attributed to a single actor but rather should be seen as a structural trait of the whole experiential event (Hennion, 2007).

An important political implication of this trait is the notion of a unique interconnection between the perceptual possibilities accessible to an individual and the respective forms of creative freedom – freedom not in a negative (to be free from any outward restrictions) but in a positive (to be able to occupy an experiential "territory" where all possibilities of the human presence at least momentarily intersect) sense. In this respect, the theoretical model proposed in this article resembles one elaborated by Jacques Rancière: an "aesthetic regime" as a permanent constellation of the sensible distinguished by its enhanced capacity to suspend and reconfigure the established arrangements of human perceptivity (2009). But unlike

[2] Thus, Walter Benjamin's thesis on incompatibility of two main modes of culturally consequential perceptual attitudes such as dispersion and concentration no longer, or at least not always, holds (2008, pp. 39–40).

Rancière, I stress the structural specificity of material presuppositions of such a constellation, adding a synchronic dimension to Rancière's mostly diachronic, that is, historical considerations of the aesthetic regime.[3]

Four ideal-typical perceptual-material clusters discussed above (Table 1) are not juxtaposed accidentally but build up a kind of space structured according to the logic of an increasing density of interconnection between elements of perceptual-material clusters. This "logic" is quite reversible: our everyday perceptual experiences consist in constantly moving forth and back – from intentionally manipulating various things to ecstatically dwelling on screen-like generative surfaces coinciding with performative space of our imagination and even superseding it.

The current urban settings abound with instances of such a bidirectional dynamics. For example, routine visits to art galleries or tourist experiences consist of manifold shifts and tensions between quick and slow modes of perception. "Quick" modes are those determined externally (by conceptual and pragmatic frameworks imposed from outside) in relation to affordances of what is perceived. "Slow" modes of perception, on the contrary, are always "tapped" and inflected by perceived "stuff". In our model, two first types of experiential clusters fall into the category of "quick" perception, two further ones into the category of "slow" perception. The interconnection of these modes accounts for the mutual and frictionless transfer between the ordinary and extraordinary in everyday life: for example, for how experiences in the artistic realm can be integrated into non-artistic perception and consciousness beyond any institutional control and outdated conceptual schemes.

Conclusions

In conclusions, I would like to recapitulate the main theses of the article as well as draw some theoretical consequences from them:

1. The central point concerns the productivity and even necessity of blurring the categorical boundaries between the (active) form and the (passive) matter. In many socially and culturally consequential cases, matter functions literally as a form, a kind of envelope, coat, or even skin, structuring, inflecting and, ultimately, accomplishing some types of perceptive as well as intellectual activity, which comprise a core of contemporary (urbanized) life. Thus, matter acquires some agential potentials, though of another kind than those which could be ascribed to an (actively, or self-consciously) perceiving and acting subject;
2. Many exceptionally productive approaches to the problem of cultural function of the matter, even those that acknowledge and systematically elaborate the agential potential of material objects, surfaces, and textures, lack any detailed analysis of the matter undergoing different but structurally interconnected stages of the "culturalization" process;
3. What is proposed as an alternative is the notion of structural interconnection of basic components of "experiential clusters" understood as "monadic" units comprising

[3] Rancière puts three main constellations of perceptual experience – ethic, representative, and aesthetic regimes – into historical perspective, linking them into an (imaginary) chronological order (2009).

specific configurations of what is perceived, thought, felt, understood, and done. These units are not merely juxtaposed but structurally interconnected into a sequence of stages that together build up the space of agential possibilities, not so easy observable but intensively felt. The range of possible actions within such a space varies substantially: from a singular act of subjectively motivated perception to an immersive experience under the guidance of a meaning generated by the whole material-emotional situation;

4. As concerns the social and cultural consequences of this "micro-ontological" perspective, I would like to mention just one but quite exemplary aspect resulting from the late stages of the aforementioned sequence: textures and screens as opposed to the objects and signs (or facilities from the nearest surroundings). What these two latter stages contribute to the social well-being is the permanent neutralization of symbolic power of the cultural artefacts from artworks to social stereotypes, which, among other things, can lead to mitigation of cultural iconoclasms. The proposed approach emphasizes the role of (perceptually activated) interstitial spaces of material textures that are capable of inflecting and scattering the human activities and of filling intra-categorical gaps that every excessively activist goal-setting inevitably leaves.[4]
5. As a consequence, an approach to visual perception proposed in this article could give rise to a revision of the very notion of creativity. What our discussion of the phenomenon of generative surface as well as of forms of experience correlative to it suggests is the necessity of weakening, or radically democratizing the notion of creativity which would allow for its ordinary, vernacular, and unexceptional forms.[5] Thus, quite paradoxically, the most radical forms of creativity turn out the most embedded ones.

Note

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[4] Tia DeNora has recently proposed a comprehensive theoretical project dedicated to the meaning-making potential of human perception able to resist any coercion from cultural categories by blurring their boundaries and filling up the intra-categorical gaps. But like many other current authors, she pays little attention to the agential potentials of the matter involved into perceptual "meaning-making" (DeNora, 2014).

[5] Though it cannot be said that current creativity research pays no attention to the vernacular, or everyday creativity (Amabile, 2017), it nevertheless hardly focuses on the basic structures of perceptual experiences in their relation to particular agential forms afforded by respective types of matter.

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ĮTVIRTINTAS KŪRYBIŠKUMAS: VIDINĖS STRUKTŪRINĖS JUNGTYS TARP MATERIALUMO, VIZUALUMO IR DALYVAVIMO KASDIENĖJE SUVOKIMO APLINKOJE

Ilya INISHEV

Santrauka

Straipsnio tikslas – išnagrinėti, kaip tam tikri materialūs paviršiai daro įtaką socialiniam kasdienės vizualinės patirties konsekventumui, generuojant, perduodant ir skleidžiant neverbalines socialines reikšmes, pabrėžus komunikacinių šiuolaikinio pasaulio praktikų svarbą, net pačią socialinę struktūrą.

Skirtingai nei daugelis dabartinių – kitų ypač produktyvių – teorinių iniciatyvų, kurios pagrindinį dėmesį skiria materialių objektų ir paviršių socialinių funkcijų socialiniam-teoriniam tyrimui, šiame straipsnyje pateikiamas požiūris išryškina tam tikras formalias struktūrines koreliacijas tarp vizualiojo suvokiamų fenomenų materialumo pobūdžio bei tarp elgesio ir emocinių galimybių suvokti subjektus. Aš siūlau „generatyvinio paviršiaus“ sąvoką kaip semantine prasme giliausią ir socialine prasme logišką vizualinio materialumo tipą – suvokiamų paviršių rūšį, kuri, skirtingai nei vien fiziniai paviršiai, steigia reikšmingą materialią aplinką, turinčią esminę įtaką mūsų kūrybiniams gebėjimams kasdienėse patirtyse.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: dalyvavimas, kūrybiškumas, materialumas, reikšmės kūrimas, medialumas, performatyvumas.